Issue Twenty Four/September 2003

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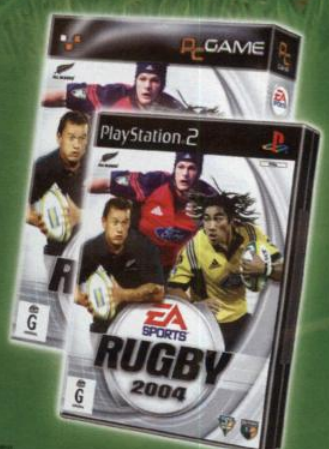

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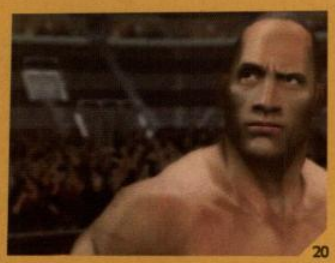
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read me

On the cover this month Warhammer 40,000 Fire Warrior is an exciting new take on an old game. If you're unfamiliar with the Warhammer universe, it was originally an old tabletop warfare game that was brought to life by the imaginations of a few diehard geeks, using dice, a number of small, hand painted figurines and acres of green felt. THQ have given the series fresh notoriety with a brand new first-person shooter, set in the Warhammer universe. It's released this month for PlayStation 2 and PC so check out our feature review on page 10.

Another, much celebrated, FPS title out for the PC this month is Halo: Combat Evolved. Developers Bungie have not only been busy working on the Xbox sequel, they've been revamping Halo for the PC. Our thanks go out to Nigel Clark, Neal and the kind folks at *www.gamers.tv* who made the review possible.

Namco are back this month with the incredible Soul Calibur II. This top 3D fighter is released simultaneously for PlayStation 2, Xbox and the Gamecube.

There's a new add-on pack for Battlefield 1942 this month, which is a bit of a favourite around here. Check out our impressions on page 16. There are a number of other big games reviewed in this month's issue as well as all the regular news, previews and prizes.

As winter draws to a close, so too does the so-called 'quiet period' for game releases. It's time to start saving your pennies because the release schedule from here until Christmas is literally overflowing with titles. We'll be bringing you the very best of them.

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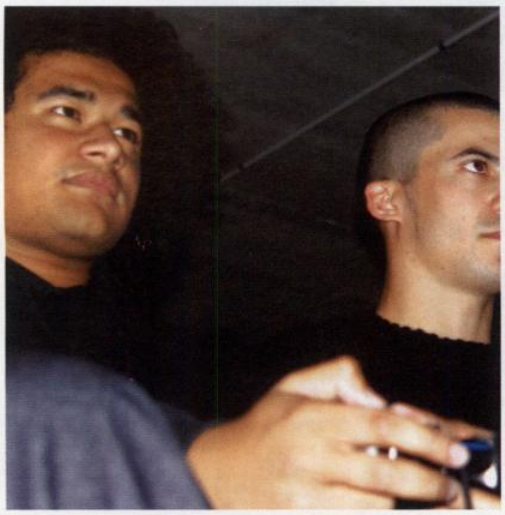
KING JERRY KEEPS HIS CROWN

Defending champ Jerry Teo proves last year was no fluke



Jerry Teo (pictured left) shows the watchful, relaxed style that has seen him win back to back GOTY competitions

Following intense National Online Qualifying and some close fought Regional Finals the scene was set for a Grand Final indeed for this year's EA Sports Gamer of the Year. Held recently at Float Bar in Auckland, the venue was superbly decked out for head-to-head console battling with black couches and plasma screens for the competitors, while the boisterous crowd was well served with grandstand seating on the main floor and the action playing out overhead on a truly massive screen. Commentary from TV3's Nathan Rarere kept everyone informed, entertained and hyped throughout the evening.

From the outset the class of the competitors was readily apparent. Watching the champions play was a real eye-opener as the games were pushed to the limits in PvP play, each player adapting and countering the favourite moves of opponents to squeeze out any advantage available. Returning Champion Jerry Teo took out the early lead but midway through the competition things opened up as Doug Wallace and Carl Condliffe made up ground rapidly to pile on the pressure. Staying tight through the closing stages of the preliminary rounds Jerry battled back and was eventually joined by Doug in the Grand Final.

Showing the skills with the new title Jerry cleaned out the Rugby 2-0 and then with the composure of a true champion drove home the final nails in the coffin with a sparkling display of NBA Street Vol. 2. Proving luck is not a factor in the quest to find New Zealand's Gamer of the Year, all the competitors involved can be proud of the skills displayed, the level of gaming excellence achieved, and the serious dose of entertainment dished out to the hot, sweaty and ever appreciative crowd. Well done EA, can't wait 'til next year!

STYLE CONSCIOUS GAMING

Sony Computer Entertainment uncovers new look PlayStation 2

Sony Computer Entertainment announces the Satin Silver PlayStation 2. A must have item for any style conscious gamer the elegant, silver matt finished console is designed to augment and blend in with your entire home entertainment system.

Not just a fashion statement, the PlayStation 2 console has had some substantial tweaks. The PS2 console (including the black console) can now play both DVD-R and DVD-RW and comes with a built in IR receiver. To add to the overall experience and atmosphere, the operational noise output of the fan is 75% quieter.

Steve Dykes, managing director of Sony Computer Entertainment New Zealand, comments that the Satin Silver PlayStation 2 is a must have for those with an eye for style.

"Technologically advanced and aesthetically pleasing, this slick-looking console allows you to enjoy the best in home entertainment without sacrificing the style of your living space. With these sleek new Silver consoles, PlayStation is no longer relegated to the games room. Anybody would be proud to have this stylish console in their living room integrated with their other home entertainment system".

The elegant looking 'Satin Silver' PlayStation 2 console is packaged with a pair of matching silver Dualshock 2 controllers

ROCKSTAR ANNOUNCES GTA 'DOUBLE PACK'

GTA III and GTA: Vice City are being packaged as a two game set for PS2 and Xbox

Rockstar Games has announced that it will release a pack containing both Grand Theft Auto III and Grand Theft Auto: Vice City for the PlayStation 2 and Xbox later this year.

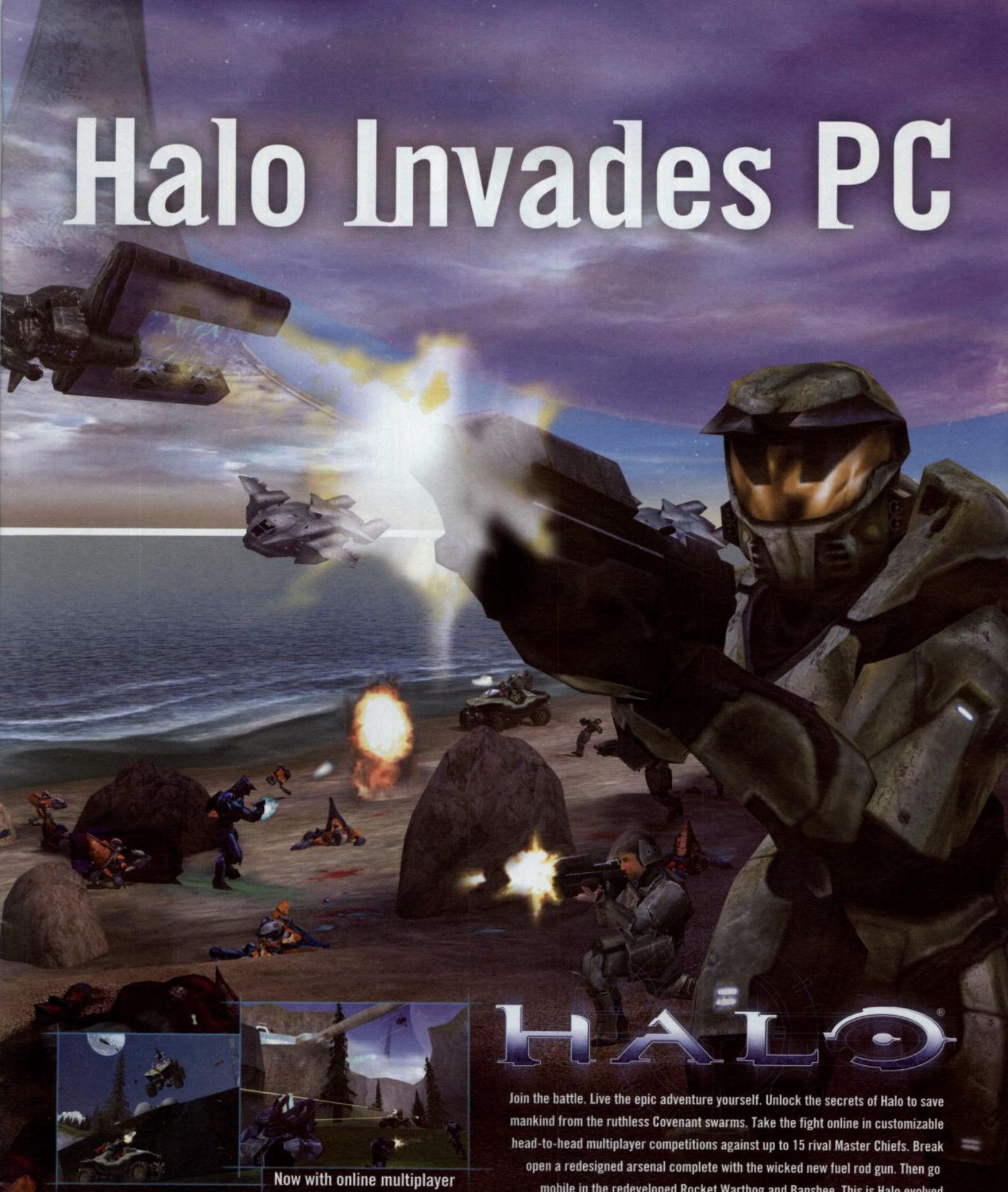
It's not yet clear whether the games will in any way improve upon the PS2 originals other than the improved visuals for the Xbox version, but today's announcement is sure to please Xbox owners who, until now, have been without a GTA title.

The PlayStation 2 pack's US release is currently scheduled for release October 22, with the Xbox version following on November 4.

No New Zealand release information was available at the time of going to print but we'll bring you more information as soon as it becomes available.

Life in Vice City isn't all guns, cars and money. We're really looking forward to seeing Rockstar's controversial titles on the Xbox, hopefully this side of Xmas

Halo Invades PC



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HALO®

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MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence
Blood and Gore
NZ Rating Pending

BUNGIE gearbox SOFTWARE POWERED BY gameSpy Microsoft game studios

www.microsoft.com/Games/Halo

Due out October

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STAR WARS RPG SELLING AT LIGHT SPEED

Xbox fans and critics praise BioWare Corp's Knights of the Old Republic

Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic , which debuted in the US July 16, set a new record for Xbox game sales, selling more than 270,000 units in just the first two weeks of availabilty.

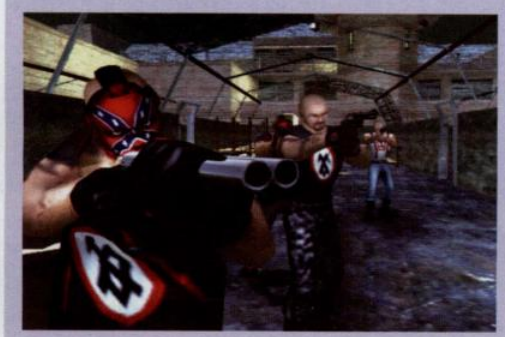
In addition to record sales, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic has received unprecedented critical acclaim. According to GameRankings.com, the game's reviews have thus far averaged 94.8%, making it the 16th best-rated game of all time, the second best game on Xbox to date, and the highest-rated RPG of all time across all platforms. "LucasArts is extremely happy that fans and media have reacted in such an overwhelmingly positive way to Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic," says Simon Jeffery, president of LucasArts. "The game clearly has conquered the North American market and we're certain it will perform just as well when it launches in overseas territories in the next few weeks."

"Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic is the first role-playing game for the Xbox platform to be connected with such a huge and successful license and we're certain it will drive a great deal of volume going through the holiday season," says Robbie Bach, senior vice president home and chief Xbox officer. "The game is off to the fastest start of any Xbox title."

Knights of the Old Republic is already the best selling Xbox title of the year in the US. We're expecting kiwi gamers to welcome it with equal zeal after it releases here this month

MOST WANTED

GRAN TURISMO 4 - Due sometime in 2004, the fourth game in this infamous racing series comes with an excellent array of new features: GT4 will have more than 500 cars, new circuits and will feature online play.



MANHUNT - Manhunt is a upcoming title from Rockstar North, who were responsible for the Grand Theft Auto series. We'll bring you a full preview next month.

IN A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

New Battlefield 1942 online league kicks off this month

This month Gamefreaks caught up with the minds behind the new Battlefield 1942 EA Cup, Jeremy (Dr J) Kingi and Damian (Rumor) Caulfield and this is what we found out. EA is launching a new league for Battlefield 1942 fans, due to start September 20, this new league will have prizes for the winning team (clan) – yes you heard that right prizes!

On the back of the success of the EA Gamer of the Year final, the final for this cup will also be held in Auckland and the two clans will be flown to Auckland to compete. This is likely to tie in with a LAN on at the same time, although the league is open to accommodate Australian players, Damian said the league wouldn't be paying for Australian players to make it to the final.

The rules or maps haven't yet been made public, but they did say there will be training nights held for new players and both Damian and Jeremy will also be running development clans that will be competing in the league, helping to expand the community. Damian mentioned that they expect around 10-15 clans to compete and each clan will have a roster of 24 players for a playing team of 12.

The MGL Battlefield 1942 League that has run over the last year will change from a league into numerous single day tournaments mainly focused on the MODs available for Battlefield, kicking off with the most popular, Desert Combat, on October 12 and Road to Rome November 2, others to be confirmed, one could be Secret Weapons of World War 2 if the online community take to it.

Expect to see a very interactive website built around this cup and other EA games join the League like C&C Generals and hey who knows, we may get a Sims Cup after all!

Bow down to the Sherman - here we see the radical Human vs. Tank tactic failing yet again

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Respect and kudos to Lucas Arts - it may have taken twenty years but someone has, at long last, reproduced the thrilling speeder bike sequence from Empire

STAR WARS ROGUE SQUADRON III

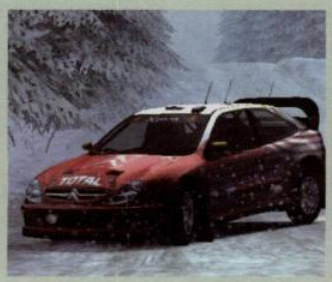
GAMECUBE ■ OCTOBER

Lucas Arts were in bed with Nintendo long before the days of Dark Forces and Shadows of the Empire on the N64. Arguably their best collaborative effort has been the Rogue Squadron series.

Rogue Squadron II was easily one the best looking early Cube titles and its heir, Star Wars: Rogue Squadron III Rebel Strike is looking even sharper. As a matter of fact Rogue Squadron III puts its predecessor to shame, graphically speaking of course.

There are thirteen levels, each broken into various stages, with recurrent side missions. Your Jedi skills will be tested within detailed environments, such as the vast forests of Endor; Hoth's foreboding, frozen world; Bespin's gaseous Cloud City; and dangerous space meteor fields. The highlight of the demo has to be the extraordinary speeder bike sequence that can be viewed in first or third-person. The forests of Endor are incredibly detailed, even zipping by at hundreds of miles an hour. Blasters can be used to topple trees, though there's no word yet on whether or not they will bring down an Ewok.

Split screen multiplayer co-operative play is a growing demand for console gamers and Star Wars: Rogue Squadron III Rebel Strike features co-op options through all the missions. The game also features a reward system allowing players to unlock bonuses including extra missions, vehicles, and locations.



COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04

PS2/XBOX ■ SEPTEMBER

Released for PlayStation 2 and Xbox this month, Colin McRae Rally 04 is already reaping critical acclaim as the best rally game on the planet. For the fourth installment of their popular series Codemasters have introduced an incredible new level of detail in the car models, including the damage you can do to them. Wheels will fly off, bonnets will bend and crumple, windscreens shatter and engines scream for mercy as your car goes into a barrel roll that would make Maverick and Goose proud.

Colin McRae Rally 04 is released this month, and is guaranteed to be every bit as challenging as it predecessors with 20 rally cars, 8 game modes (including 4-wheel drive, 2-wheel drive, Group B and Expert Championships) and a new faster game engine for improved textures. The game also has all new environments in 8 international rally locations (UK, Sweden, USA, Finland, Australia, Spain, Greece and Japan), 6 rally stages in each, 8 shakedown events, and 4 Superspecial stages.

This year's FIFA Football 2004 features a soundtrack that includes songs from Radiohead, Junior Senior, Tribalista and Underworld, to name only a few

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004

ALL FORMATS ■ OCTOBER

It's FIFA time again, and EA have upped the stakes once more with this hugely popular title. Whether you've played any of the FIFA games before or not you'll be able to pick this one up and start playing instantly, and it's great to see a title that is both quick to learn and easy to play yet at the same time have so many features you'll be hard pressed to discover them all before the release of next years release.

Each new EA Sports title is always a vast improvement on the previous release and FIFA Football 2004 is no exception. This year sees yet more fine-tuning of the in-game engine with enhanced animation giving the players a much smoother, more organic look. The brand new Off The Ball Control gives you more say over what all the other players in your team are doing - have them jostle for space or lose a marker for that crucial pre-half-time midfield lob or send your forward on a run to pick up that sneaky pass forward. As always the soccer game fanatic has been well catered for with the FIFA Deep Career Mode; build your team and guide them to the championship while managing budgets and keeping an eye out for young emerging talent. Add all this to the added scope that the ability to play other gamers online gives and you've got a title that is guaranteed to give hours of football bliss.

MAX PAYNE 2 THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

PC ■ OCTOBER

Nearly every aspect of the original game's production has been updated and improved for this sequel. Great looking real-time shadowing and dynamic lighting push everything far beyond the standards achieved in the first game.

DOG'S LIFE

PLAYSTATION 2 ■ OCTOBER

This game puts you in the role of a cheeky young dog named Jake. It's played out largely in third-person but also features a first-person 'smellovision' mode in which odours stand out as bright colours. By collecting scents, players access mini-games including races, rat catching, sheep herding and territory marking.

WARHAMMER 40,000 FIRE WARRIOR

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2, PC

GENRE:
First-person Shooting

PLAYERS:
1-8 Players/Online

AVAILABLE:
September 26

WEBSITE:
www.firewarrior.com

Games Workshop, creators of the Warhammer 40,000 world, have been around for more than 15 years now, and although they have yet to really make their mark in this country, their following overseas, particularly in the country of origin, England, has taken on an almost religious fervour. A huge amount of imagination has been poured into the development of the universe, with hundreds of races, tribes, individual characters and legends being woven together to form a very complex history that reaches perhaps the level of detail usually reserved for Star Trek fans.

Set, as you'd expect from the title, 40 thousand years in the future, the Warhammer world is gothic and bleak with war being very much the centre focus. With so much rich imagery having been developed for the game it is easy to see how such a huge following evolved, however until now the action has been restricted to taking place on a felt covered table with little painted figurines and people hunched over their armies directing the battle from above in a very creator-esque fashion.

As geek-heavy as the Warhammer 40,000 license is, the source material is rich in history and detail – this should help elevate this title above some of its rivals

Set in the future, in the year 40,000, Warhammer 40K Fire Warrior gives you only 24 hours to win the war; mercifully there are no journalists imbedded

Many of the developers who were approached by publishers THQ and Games Workshop themselves to come up with an idea for a console game based on the Warhammer 40k universe came back with the idea to re-create the tabletop game and faithfully represent it electronically, however developer British developers Kuju Entertainment proposed to make a First Person Shooter, a game that made excellent use of the amazing imagery and artwork that comes with such a vibrant universe and would have more instant mass-appeal than would a faithful representation of the popular tabletop game.

Rather than do the obvious and put you in control of a Space Marine, Kuju decided to make you play the role of a young Tau warrior. The Tau are a relatively new race in the scheme of the Warhammer world and who, according to Games Workshop, have more humanity than humanity itself. The Fire Warriors are an elite Tau warrior fighting force and your character, Kais, is a young member of the group who is eager to make his mark. The game begins with a force of Fire Warriors making an assault on a human

planet to rescue its leader, and you are quickly outnumbered and left to fend for yourself as the rest of your team is overcome.

A twisting and turning plot soon develops as you are given 24 hours to save your race from certain destruction and over the course of those 24 hours you will travel to five distinct and very good looking locations, including the Tau mother ship, a huge, gothic-cathedral style Imperial flagship and a planet surface infested with the evilest of evil dudes, Chaos Warriors. Chaos itself manifested into an evil force as more and more humans were born with the ability to use psychic powers of some description and in the later stages of the game you will find yourself teaming up with the Space Marines to battle some of the more chaotic Chaos forces.

Most of the time you will be far too busy to stop and look around, but when you do you will be impressed with what you see. The textures are striking, and the first level offers a mix of earthy, trench-based warfare style textures complete with bunkers and wooden struts, and steel and concrete textures as you move from a relatively unscarred landscape to where the real action is. Movement is smooth and frame-rates are satisfying, although when the onscreen activity really starts to heat up you will notice a certain amount of bumpiness.

Drawing on influences from many of the top First Person Shooters available was something Kuju placed quite a lot of importance on, and you will see elements from Medal of Honour, Jedi Knight, Half-Life and of course Halo throughout the game. The health and shield mechanism from Halo, for example, means that you won't be needing to be constantly backtracking to find those medi-packs, and the currently very popular two-gun system adds an element of "Should I pick that up or do I want to stick with this bad-boy?" that you don't get with hanging on to every gun you pick up. A choice of over 17 weapons throughout the game however means you definitely won't be wanting for firepower.

While it's probably not going to be a contender for FPS of the year, Fire Warriors is an action-packed title set in a rich and varied landscape that has been influenced by the best of the best with a gripping story that will keep you guessing right to the very end. That may not be enough to put it up on the pedestal that for some reason only Halo sits upon, but it will certainly keep anyone who picks it up very happy for many hours.

Most of the time you will be far too busy to stop and look around, but the environments are looking crisp and colorful, and so far, we've seen no signs of any real graphical flaws

HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PC, Xbox

GENRE:
First-person Shooting

PLAYERS:
1-16 Players/Online

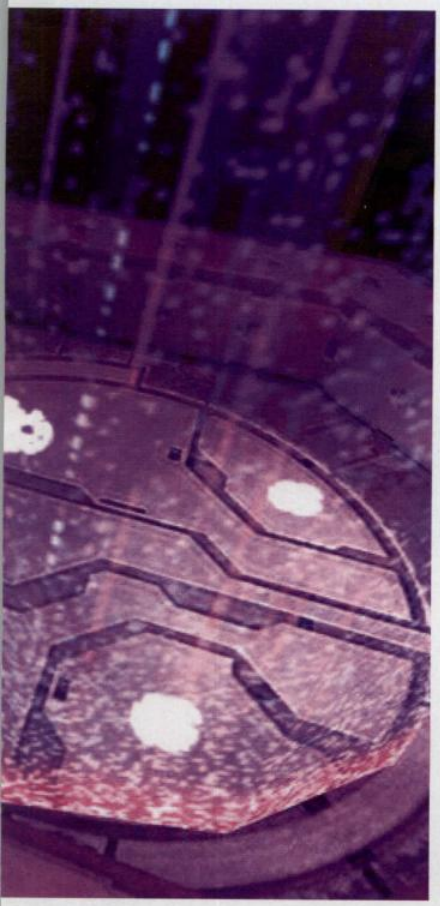
AVAILABLE:
September 28

WEBSITE:
www.microsoft.com/games/halo/

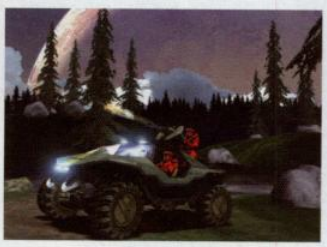
For the two or three of you out there that haven't yet heard of Halo, it serves as the unofficial flagship title for the Xbox and still sells like hotcakes even today, almost two years after its release! Halo details the desperate battle that humanity faces - against an ultra-religious coalition of aliens called the Covenant who have decided that humans need to be wiped out. It's a losing battle for mankind as they are outnumbered and the Covenant have the better technology, their only hope is research into a group of cyborgs, one of which is the 'Master Chief' - the main character for the game. The events of Halo take place on a giant ring with terrestrial qualities, that appears to both the Covenant and the small group of Humans stranded on it to be a weapon capable of winning the war for them. So far there are some nice extras for the PC version of Halo, most important of which is the ability to play the game online with up to fifteen other players in a range of customizable game types. There are half a dozen new maps, although a couple of them would not load with our beta disc. All of the maps are large and look exciting to play, especially Timberland which features hills, trees, rocks, and bunkers. I can see Timberland being a favourite for large scale sniper and vehicle battles. There are two new weapons that are available only in multiplayer. One is the flamethrower which at close range is exceptionally deadly. I set myself on fire to experiment and watched as my shields and health disappeared in about four seconds. The other new weapon is called the fuel rod cannon, which is what the large hunters use in the single player game. Think a mortar that fires big green balls of plasma! There is a new kind of Warthog vehicle with a rocket launcher on the back. After firing three rockets you have to wait about four seconds for a reload. The Covenant's flying bomber, the Banshee, is now available in the multiplayer games. Why this was never so in the Xbox version I do not know, but PC gamers can now glide about the maps dropping bombs and doing their best to avoid incoming fire in this fragile vehicle. There were some problems with the game but thankfully most were issues because of the games beta status and will obviously be fixed for the final release. These included the game crashing for no apparent reason, not starting up if a firewall such as zonealarm is active, no way to play online (Gamespy Arcade and Microsoft's Zone haven't yet been set up for it). The only true disappointment is after searching and searching there appeared to be no sign of a co-op mode. Playing co-op Halo on the Xbox is among my best gaming experiences and the rare event of having a game with a polished story-based co-op mode could be one of the things that will serve to truly distinguish Halo from its competition in the

Within the game, it's apparent that the missions play out the same as they do on the Xbox, including level design, objectives, and the number of enemies

As well as new weapons, there are three new vehicles in the multiplayer, including the banshee, a rocket-equipped warthog & the covenant gun turret



PC market. Let us hope it makes an appearance for the final release. The controls for Halo were a little weird at first. The mouse/keyboard combo sees you aiming and shooting a lot quicker than with a controller. At close range with enemies dashing back and forward and ducking it was harder to get a bearing on them, that's something that should get solved with practice and something that experiences FPS gamers will have no problem getting used to. Of course you can customize your settings however you like. Default mouse controls see the left button fire your weapon and the right throws grenades. With the PC version of Halo you can crank up the resolution, a major improvement over the Xbox version. Plenty still needed to be worked on before final release - the stationery shields that the Covenant set up were invisible, while the cloaked elites who should have been effectively invisible were clear grey shapes. The ocean is black with white blobs and the Covenant weapons' fire and personal shields are interesting colours. The Human faces look like they are covered in massive birthmarks. The full release of Halo on the PC will no doubt polish up these graphics. The good news is that the various characters in Halo move with a natural grace that is so much more impressive than the stilted and limited moves you see in the majority of first person shooters. There's no way anybody can complain about the audio in Halo, from the chanting monk music in the intro screen to the explosive chaos of battle it is sheer ecstasy and like the Xbox version - the audio helps gives Halo that epic feel. Well it's not perfect yet but it's coming along nicely and it's sure to become a favourite to many of those that have so far not had the pleasure of playing Halo. Amid some tough upcoming competition like Doom 3 and Half Life 2 it may not become 'the' title to have, but it's certainly going to be up there.



Nearly two years have passed since Halo debuted along with the Xbox, and in that time, the game has already sold more than three million copies; it will be interesting to see if PC gamers warm to it the same way

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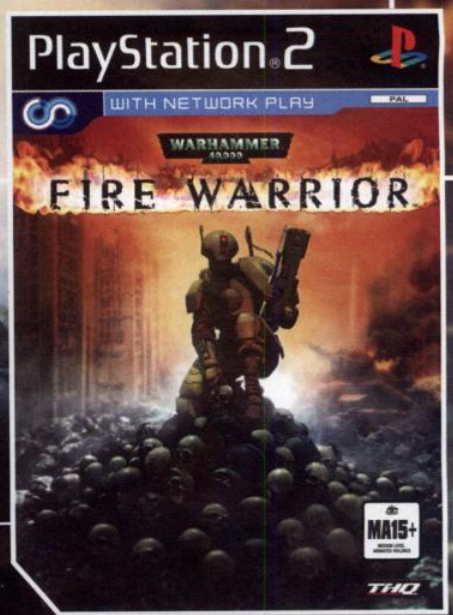

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THQ

SOUL CALIBUR 2

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PS2/Xbox/Cube

GENRE:
3D Fighting

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
September 25

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz

The previous games in Namco's series were both highly rated in the cutthroat world of 3D fighting

All 23 characters are remarkably detailed motion capture animation and have crisp texturing in both the characters and 3D environments. At 60 fps you can easily see the detailed character models, animation, and self-shadowing

Namco has given the world more than a few arcade-to-console hits, most notably Tekken, Time Crisis and Ridge Racer. The success of the Tekken franchise has overshadowed some their other games, particularly fellow 3D fighter, Soul Calibur.

Soul Calibur began its life as Soul Edge, a popular coin-op that graduated to the PlayStation as Soul Blade towards the end of the 90s. Its sequel was the original Soul Calibur, which appeared in the arcades and as a standout title for Sega's discarded Dreamcast console.

The long awaited Soul Calibur 2 has been available in Japan for some time and with the help of publishers EA, Namco are ready to release the PAL version simultaneously on PlayStation 2, Xbox and Gamecube.

Soul Calibur 2 comes with 20 selectable characters, old and new. Not all of them are available right from the outset. Working your way through Weapons Master Mode unlocks Sophitia, Seung Mina, Cervantes, Charade, and Tekken exchange student Yoshimitsu. Old favourites Mitsurugi, Talim, Kilik, Astaroth, Taki and Voldo are joined by new fighters Yunsung, Sophitia's daughter Cassandra, and Raphael, a sword wielding buccaneer. Another late addition is Necrid - the mean, green, Todd McFarlane designed, fighting machine. Siegfried almost counts as a new character as well, having gone through a metamorphosis of sorts after winning the previous event - he's now going by the catchy handle "Nightmare."

Namco even went to the trouble of including a bonus character exclusive (and relevant) to each of the three consoles. The PS2 version allows you to select Tekken big shot Heihachi, who seems slightly out of place and conspicuously exposed without a weapon. Cube owners will be able to play as Link (not the cute, cel-shaded one) and Xbox gamers will be able to fight as comic book antihero, Spawn.

Mission Battle mode has been replaced with the new Weapons Master mode. However, the two actually operate similarly, the biggest difference being the ability to not only unlock new levels and characters, but also new weapons for your characters. There are tons of ways to play, including Arcade, Versus, Team Battle, Versus Team Battle, the list goes on and on.

The keys to a successful 3D fighting game are having a good control system and maintaining the equilibrium between the fighters. Soul Calibur 2 has many different fighting styles and an incredibly diverse cast of varying shapes and sizes yet it never feels imbalanced.

In terms of its control, Soul Calibur 2 is quite user friendly; even the crudest button masher will do okay for a while. But mastering Soul Calibur 2 will require immense skill and dexterity, not to mention dedication in sharpening ones skills.

We think Soul Calibur 2 is the best 3D fighter around at the moment.

BATTLEFIELD 1942: SECRET WEAPONS OF WWII

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PC

GENRE:
First-person Shooting

PLAYERS:
Online

AVAILABLE:
Out Now

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz

Throughout World War II both Allied and Axis forces were working on top-secret projects, from aircraft to armor. Most of them have never seen combat – until now.

With 8 new maps, 16 new vehicles, new weapons, and new game play, the latest expansion pack for Battlefield 1942, takes fans to the next level.

Maps range from a mysterious airfield outside Prague to a wintry Telemark region of Norway and now include night maps which bring a whole new dimension to the game, you can hear the planes, but you can't see them. All 8 maps are nicely designed, and are very playable, 6 of these maps also have the option of Objective mode.

Secret Weapons of WWII's Objective mode sees the Allies with missions to complete, for example: the Allied forces advance on Obersalzberg to capture the Eagle's Nest. They must breach a heavily fortified door into the building and destroy a safe containing military secrets. The Axis tickets are linked directly to the objectives and only deplete if and when the objectives are being met. Objective mode online is heaps of fun, and definitely worth a look.

New weapons range from throwing knives and shotguns to Silenced Stens and Semiautomatic Sniper Rifles. The throwing knives are standard issue for the British Commando and the German Elite, a well thrown knife will kill the enemy instantly. Another killer is the Remington Auto 5 Shot gun; this is the gun of the American Engineer. Its auto loading feature comes in handy when clearing out a spawn point. British Medics now carry a silenced Sten Mk2, and the Gewehr 43 allows German Snipers to stay in scope view while reloading. There too many new weapons to mention them all.

Motorbikes with machine guns on their side cars, amphibious vehicles, missile launchers on Sherman tanks, and Naval guns strapped onto the top of Tiger tanks are just some of the new ground vehicles. Jet engines play a large roll in the new planes, from the tiny German Nutter Rocket Plane and the American F-85 Goblin to the giant Horton HO229 and Armstrong Whitworth AW-52.

Give them all a trial by fire on the battlefields of WWII. This is your chance to take the experiments out of the lab and into combat.

Defeat your enemies with experimental vehicles; guided missiles, the German rocket pack, and a new mobile spawn point in the C-47 cargo plane

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REPUBLIK★4960

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PC

GENRE:
Sports

PLAYERS:
1-8 Players

AVAILABLE:
Out now

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz

Last year's Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003 in particular captured the imagination of console golfers, as well as the traditional golf-mad PC crowd.

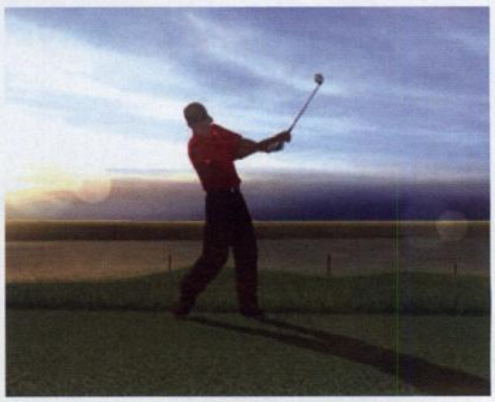
One year on, EA Sports are releasing Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004, allowing armchair golf-nuts to once again to play a round as Tiger himself. This new installment also gives you the opportunity to create your own golfer using the 'Game face' option that lets you edit everything from hairstyles and clothing to the width of your nose.

Some of the game's regular features have also been tweaked, including PGA season mode where you can now enjoy a career that spans over a decade. As usual, any winnings you should happen to pick up can be used to purchase equipment, including hundreds of licensed shirts, golf gear, and even celebratory animations. You'll also be able to obtain sponsorship, depending on how much fame your golfer gets.

New play modes such as the Long drive challenge lets you face-off against an opponent to hit the ball as far as possible. Another new way to play is Battle mode, which again pits you against another golfer on a hole-by-hole basis, with the winner of each hole taking away one of the opposing golfer's clubs!

Seven new courses were added bringing the grand total to 19 courses including St Andrews, Pebble Beach, Sawgrass, The Royal Birkdale Golf Club and Spyglass Hill and four original challenge designs including two new fantasy courses.

Online functionality will be a factor in Tiger Woods 2004. The PlayStation 2 version of the game will go online, and, like the PC version, players will (eventually) be able to play against others and their own scores.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004 is set for release for the Gamecube, Xbox, PlayStation 2, and PC, and it's also in development for the Game Boy Advance

URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PS2/PC/Xbox/Cube

GENRE:
Sports

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players

AVAILABLE:
October 9

WEBSITE:
www.acclaim.com

The passes tend to be toe-to-toe, there are martial arts type kicks, all in keeping with the open, coin-op feel of the game

Developers Silicon Dreams are best known for producing the UEFA Championship League series, which offered all the pomp and ceremony of top European football. They've let their hair down a little with this new arcade-style footy title.

Urban Freestyle Soccer is to football what NBA Street Vol. 2 (EA Big) was to basketball. The huge stadiums and hyperactive crowds make way for derelict back alleys, quads, skate parks and similar urban settings - pretty much anywhere you can kick a ball around. Like NBA Street, the team numbers have been culled in the interests of speeding up the action. Plus the pitch is about a quarter of the size of an actual soccer field.

Players choose from ten four-man squads from all around the world. The teams bear more resemblance to street gangs than footy sides. They each have a distinct playing technique and a preferred style of music. The Skater Boys, for example, listen to grunge and are risk takers on and off the field; The Low Riders are a mucho loco Hispanic side who listen to rap and play a fast, aggressive game. Then there's the BMX Crew, The Honeys, The Taggin' Crew, Shakedown... you get the idea.

Urban Freestyle Soccer offers five game modes including Home Turf, Freestyle, Versus Mode, Street Challenge and Training. The basic control system is a lot more forgiving than traditional soccer titles. With a little practice you can pull off astounding feats of athleticism, mastering the combos is not essential in order to win but they are vital for earning points that can be used to upgrade team attributes.

Worth mentioning is the soundtrack, including tunes from Method Man, TLC, Feeder and a great track from Queen's of the Stone Age.

NFL FEVER 2004

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
Xbox

GENRE:
3D Action/Adventure

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
September 25

WEBSITE:
www.thq.com

Microsoft's NFL Fever franchise was originally a PC title. It lacked some of the Madden-like detail, but by and large, it stood up well against the all-powerful EA Sports juggernaut. NFL Fever 2004 is the third installment for the Xbox and easily the best yet.

When playing an NFL title, no one wants to be the "tight end" or the "wide receiver", for that matter. Everyone wants to be the star which is why NFL Fever 2004 lets you step into the shoes of the QB. The game's passing mechanism is now wide open, allowing gamers to choose passing options that best suit their style of play. There is the straightforward 'single button' pass option, which is standard feature of NFL games. But NFL Fever 2004 also lets you use the trigger, which adds another button press but gives you greater control over the pass. A third option lets you control your receivers using the right thumb stick after the snap, though this leaves you with a lot to do and only two thumbs to do it with.

Calling the right plays is important. The 'Playpicker' takes the pressure off before each down, offering up basic formations and plays. More advanced plays are available once you have a handle on the game.

Microsoft Games Studios have extended the multiplayer opportunities beyond the normal options. Obviously, NFL Fever 2004 can be played in with up to four players (eight if you link two consoles) but it's the Xbox Live prospects that are the most alluring. Network play, once everybody has broadband, will mean online tournaments and leagues. And of course, there's the voice; being able to trash talk your opponent after you score a touchdown will be something to savour.

NFL Fever 2004 is all class and a worthy alternative to the current NFL favourites from Sega and EA Sports.

One cool feature is that players can save whenever they want. If you've got to go out suddenly and don't want to leave the Xbox on all night, you can save your game in the middle of the quarter

The diverse selection of songs offers a little something for everyone, with gameplay that is fun, challenging and fiendishly addictive in the extreme

AMPLITUDE

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
Rhythm/Party

PLAYERS:
1-2 Players

AVAILABLE:
September 24

WEBSITE:
www.playstation.co.nz

The sequel to last year's Frequency is released this month and promises more addictive, rhythm-based gameplay for beat junkies, wannabe producers and aspiring armchair DJs.

The simple gameplay has you traveling along a sonic freeway made up of multicolored lanes. Each lane represents an instrument (percussion instruments are red, blue for bass and so on) and there are markers called note capsules on each lane that corresponds to buttons on your controller.

Pressing the correct button as you pass over the various note capsules releases the sonic energy, a section of the song. When you successfully complete a few measures worth of notes, you'll activate that section and then move onto another instrument until you've built a complete song, all live and on the fly.

Using L1, R1 and R2 buttons takes some getting used to, but it's infinitely faster than trying to play using the circle, triangle, square and X buttons. Keep an eye out for useful power-ups that can clear and activate an entire channel, while another will slow the game to a crawl, making it easy for you to bring your tune back on track. Once you've locked in all the tracks, there's a chance to perform a little freestyle scratching.

Amplitude's developers (Harmonix) have cranked everything up a few notches and come up with an even more diverse selection of tunes for this sequel. The impressive list includes David Bowie, Garbage, Herbie Hancock, Weezer, Pink, Blink 182, Papa Roach, Mekon & Roxanne, Quarashi, Manchild, Slipknot, Game Boyz, Logan 7, Dieselboy, P.O.D., Production Club and BT.

All in all, we can't find anything wrong with Amplitude.

CHAOS LEGION

DETAILS

PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

GENRE:
3D Action

PLAYERS:
1 Player

AVAILABLE:
August 28

WEBSITE:
www.ea.co.nz

Earlier this month we took a look at Chaos Legion; it was still early code but right away the speed, beauty and elegance of the game's dynamic fight sequences were impressive. Not unlike Devil May Cry, recurrent battle scenes pit your character, Sieg Wahrheit, against an array of demonic creations.

Sieg can summon up the chaos legions; a crew of hostile spirits who eagerly take on all nearby enemies, leaving your character to deal to any leftovers with a few languid swooshes of a sword. The easy targeting system allows you to direct your posse of monsters to attack precise targets. Or you can just let them loose to wipe out whoever is in the room.

As players progress through the 15 levels, power ups and enhancements strengthen your legion, which you'll need as later battles get frantic.

As always, there's a complex plot to wade through in between hacking and slashing wildly at anything that moves. The game's dialogue can be a bit longwinded – another characteristic of Goth inspired titles – but with the sheer number of enemies and their endless frenzied assaults, you might be glad for a little downtime.

Graphically, Chaos Legion is eye-catching. The gloomy castle settings and the insect-like beasts have been superbly brought to life. There are some issues with the camera, which rotates constantly. This certainly provides a cinematic view, but often players are forced to defend themselves against an attacking enemy standing just out of camera shot.

Minor flaws aside, this is another fine 3D action title from the creative minds at Capcom. If you enjoyed their Devil May Cry franchise, Chaos Legion delivers even more of the same gothic, hack-slash adventure.

Sieg is typical of a Goth game lead. He looks more like a hairdresser than a slayer of demons but he has a secret weapon to unleash on multiple opponents

WWE RAW 2 RUTHLESS AGGRESSION

DETAILS

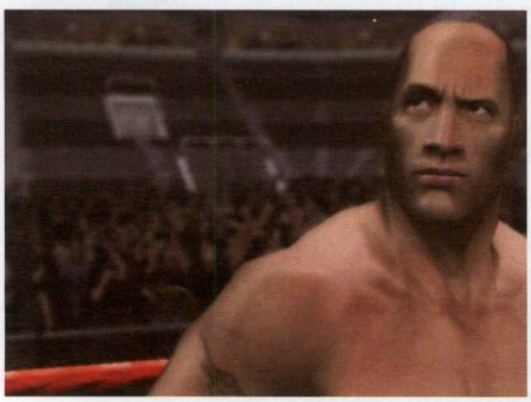
PLATFORM:
Xbox

GENRE:
Wrestling

PLAYERS:
1-4 Players

AVAILABLE:
October 3

WEBSITE:
www.thq.com



The 60-plus wrestlers in WWE Raw 2 all have detailed facial animations, and authentic wrestler mannerisms

If you thought wrestling was dead (like we did) you'd better wake up and smell what the Rock's been cooking. The WWE (formerly the WWF) recently took their show on the road, touring down under to jam-packed audiences in Melbourne and Sydney. Wrestling games, though obviously not everyone's first choice, are still very well received by the video gaming community and you can take from that what you will.

The key to enjoying (or enduring) wrestling is not taking it too seriously. You don't need your face driven into a corner post to realise that wrestling is simply not real. However, the hazards these modern day gladiators face most definitely are. Often called on to perform the most outrageous stunts, modern wrestlers are 'pure gold' for game developers.

WWE Raw Ruthless Aggression is a huge improvement over its predecessor. Wrestling fans we're universally let down by the original but a lot of money and resources have been poured into this sequel to get things right.

The 60-plus wrestlers in WWE Raw 2 have facial animations, as well as authentic mannerisms based on their real-life (or wrestling) personas. The crowd is animated and rendered in full 3D as well, adding atmosphere to the game. The in-game animations have been cleaned up, making the wrestlers look less robotic, and Raw 2's developers have also promised faster gameplay.

A new Season mode allows four human players to work together or compete head-to-head for various championship belts, and offers the soap opera-like atmosphere missing from the first game. Taking full advantage of the Xbox's four controller ports, you and three friends can schedule a slate of four matches can interfere with each other's matches, just like on television.

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OUT THIS MONTH...

FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004

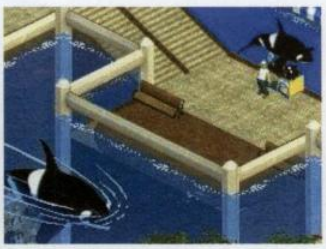
PC ■ MICROSOFT

100 years have passed since the Wright brothers sat in the little Wright Flyer and flew for a little under 13 seconds, and what better way to celebrate the fact that we've been winging our way around the skies for a century than for Microsoft to bring out another flight simulator.

AGE OF WONDERS SHADOW MAGIC

PC ■ TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE

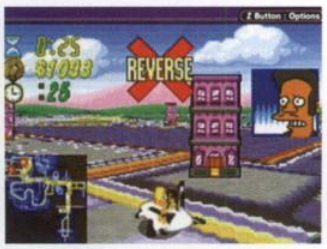
Shadow Magic is extremely addictive once you get the hang of it. There's been a whole bunch of improvements over the original - new units, characters, races, maps, etc. Overall, this is a satisfying experience for fans and an excellent new challenge to newbies.



ZOO TYCOON PACK

PC ■ MICROSOFT

This new Zoo Tycoon collector's edition has all the animals from the original, Dinosaur Digs and Marine Mania expansion packs as well as the all-new Endangered Species Theme Pack. 40 new objects, over 100 animals; for more information and free content, visit *www.zootycoon.com*



THE SIMSONS ROAD RAGE

GBA ■ NINTENDO

Monty Burns is holding Springfield to ransom; you have to earn a million dollars by starting your own taxi business, transporting familiar Simpson's characters to their destinations as swiftly as humanly possible. Road Rage is like Crazy Taxi in a wacky Simpson's parallel universe.

STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

PC/XBOX ■ EA GAMES

Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic is an astounding title. There's just so much to sink your teeth into, especially if you're already a fan of RPG gaming; a million and one options, inventory management, weapons and items to collect, buy and sell, as well as upgrades and levels ups.

MADDEN NFL 2004

PS2, PC, XBOX ■ EA SPORTS

Madden 2004's revamped Owner Mode places you at the helm of a top franchise, designing your own contracts to lure players, hiring, training and firing staff, setting salaries and ticket prices. You can even build a brand new stadium and name it after you.

V8 SUPERCARS RACE DRIVER

XBOX ■ A TARI

This top racer from is about to join the list of budget Xbox titles. They've actually created a story where you play rookie driver Ryan McKane but the hum of the V8 engines as you roar over the hill at Bathurst is worth the price of admission alone.

YU-GI-OH DUELIST OF THE ROSE

PLAYSTATION2 ■ ATARI

The definitive Tactical Card Battling game arrives on the PS2; a New Yu-Gi-Oh! for a New Generation. Yugi and Seto are set to clash again. Choose your side in the Wars of the Roses and fight to collect all of the magical and powerful Rose Cards.

THE GETAWAY PLATINUM

PLAYSTATION 2 ■ SCE

A story-driven gangster title, set in London's east end. You play a retired bank robber forced back into London's underworld by crime boss, Charlie Jolson. What starts out as a tale of extortion turns into a twisted story about a man's fragile grip on his freedom and sanity.

F-ZERO

GAMECUBE ■ NINTENDO

Hurtle through space at mind-boggling speeds as Captain Falcon and the galaxy's other best pilot's in a race for glory. Nintendo and Sega have collaborated to create the fastest, most visually stunning racing game ever! F-Zero is the race to end all races, exclusive to Gamecube.

POKEMON PINBALL RUBY/SAPPHIRE

GBA ■ NINTENDO

Pokémon Pinball: Ruby & Sapphire is new, fun, trouble-free challenge for young GBA fans. The game contains 200 of the cute little guys, including well-known favorites Pikachu and Pichu. The game even has a Pokédex section so you can learn about the monsters you've captured.

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

GBA ■ NINTENDO

By using the familiar characters and classes of the Final Fantasy series, but with an entirely original plot, Final Fantasy Tactics Advance provides RPG lovers with an equally compelling, all new excursion into the immersive world of strategic combat and assault – on a handheld.

COMPETITIONS

FLAME GBA SP

Nintendo have provided us with one of these funky Flame coloured GBA SPs to give away. Just answer the following question to be in the draw!

"Which legendary video games company makes the GBA?"

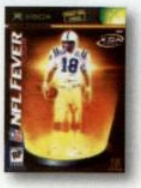
a) "Sega"
b) "Nintendo"
c) "Atari"

WARHAMMER 40K FIRE WARRIOR

We have 2 PS2 copies of this month's cover/feature game up for grabs. Just answer the following question to be in the draw to win!

"Thor was the Norse god of... what?"

a) "Heavy Metal"
b) " Thunder"
c) "Hammers"



NFL FEVER 2004

Microsoft has kindly provided 2 copies of NFL Fever 2004 for the Xbox. Simply answer the following question to be in the draw to win!

"What do the letters NFL stand for?"

a) "National Football League"
b) "Narcoleptic for life"
c) "Not for licking"

AMPLITUDE

From Sony Computer Entertainment NZ, we have 3 copies of Amplitude (PS2) to give away. Answer the following to be in the draw to win!

"Amplitude is the sequel to what SCEI PS2 title?"

a) "Frequency"
b) "Tekken 3"
c) "Barbie Race and Ride"

HOW TO ENTER

Write your name, phone number and contact details on the back of the envelope, list the prize you're after and you *will* need to include the correct answer. All correct entries immediately go into the draw to win. Prizes will be drawn and all winners notified Wednesday October 8, 2003.

Send to: Gamefreaks Competition, PO Box 68211, Newton, Auckland or e-mail: competitions@tenthplanet.co.nz (Maximum 3 entries per e-mail address)

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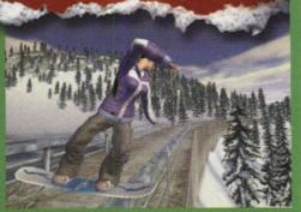

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